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PATENT

SYSTEM AND METHOD OF GENERATING REVENUE THROUGH TOURNAMENT PLAY

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RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of a co-pending U.S. Patent Application (Serial No. 10/396,390 to Gillan et al. entitled "GAME SERVER SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR GENERATING REVENUE THEREWITH," filed March 26, 2003 and is hereby incorporated in its entirety by reference herein.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention:

[0002] This invention relates to gaming systems. Specifically, the present invention relates to a system and method of generating revenue from tournament play in a gaming system.

Description of the Related Art:

[0003] With the dramatic rise in Internet and wireless services, users are now provided with network games. In a network environment, players communicate through a game server and play games against the game server, and at times, other players. In an Internet environment, the players utilize computers to communicate with the game server and other connected

players. In addition, in a mobile telecommunications system, players utilize mobile phones, portal digital assistants (PDAs) and other mobile communication devices to communicate with other players and the game server. Typically, the downloaded game may be charged to a player. Additionally, in existing systems, game providers receive revenue from advertising.

[0004] Although there are no known prior art teachings of a device such as that disclosed herein, prior art references that discuss subject matter that bears some relation to matters discussed herein are U.S. Patent Number 6,676,522 to Rowe et al. (Rowe), U.S. Patent Application Publication Number 2002/0039923 to Cannon et al. (Cannon), U.S. Patent Application Publication Number 2002/0193162 to Walker et al. (Walker), and U.S. Patent Application Publication Number 2003/0190960 to Jokipii et al. (Jokipii).

[0005] Rowe discloses a gaming system having a portable gaming device which is capable of receiving and sending information to a remote device/location. Rowe also discloses a payment transaction server which validates payment from a player and establishes an entitlement of the player to play a game via the portable gaming system. Rowe does not teach or suggest a tournament play for a plurality of players. In addition, Rowe merely discloses a gaming system, which allows a remotely located player to play a game associated with a centralized game server.

[0006] Cannon discloses a tournament gaming system, which includes a plurality of gaming machines programmed for a tournament style game. The plurality of gaming machines are connected to a host computer. The tournament games may be conducted at a predetermined minimum rate of play. Cannon does not teach or suggest sharing of revenue by various service providers, receiving fees from players playing multiple games where each game is charged a fee, or executing tournament rounds in a sequential order upon individual completion of a round by a player.

[0007] Walker discloses a method and system for operating a video game or video game tournament. A bonus is provided to a player playing the video game or participating in the video game tournament. A player pays a single entry fee to compete in the tournament. Walker does not teach or suggest a scheme of tournament play where revenue is obtained from a player playing multiple games where each game is charged a fee. In addition, Walker does not disclose sharing revenue obtained from the tournament play.

[0008] Jokipii discloses an online gaming system operative in a client-server environment in which users are provided tools for creating and managing online gaming leagues in which a group of member users can play the online games with and against one another in a scheduled and organized fashion. The gaming system also enables users to create tournaments in which member users compete against one other in various tournament schemes. Jokipii does not teach or suggest obtaining revenue from players, each player playing multiple games where each game is charge a fee. Additionally, Jokipii does not disclose a tournament scheme of play where each round may be sequentially completed by individual players at their own pace.

[0009] Existing systems utilize a multi-player network system enabling players to play games against a game server or other players. However, the existing systems do not teach or suggest a tournament scheme enabling players to play selected rounds on a pay per game/round basis. In addition, no existing system discloses a tournament scheme whereby players play sequential rounds within a tournament at the player's individual pace. A system and method is needed which provides an incentive to the player to play multiple games while maximizing revenue to the providers of the network. Also, there is also no system or method for sharing revenue by various providers in the network.

[0010] Thus, it would be a distinct advantage to have a system and method which incorporates a tournament scheme of play for encouraging

player participation in multiple games as well as generating revenue for various providers of the network. It is an object of the present invention to provide such a system and method.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] In one aspect, the present invention is a method of generating revenue to a game provider from users each having a communication device within a network provided by a network provider. The method begins by establishing a tournament having a plurality of rounds. Each round enables the user to play a game provided by a game server on the user's communication device through the tournament. A fee is determined for each game played by the user in the tournament. The determined fee is sent from the game server to the network provider. A portion of the revenue collected by the network provider is transferred to the game provider based upon each game played.

[0012] In another aspect, the present invention is a system for sharing revenue generated from users of communication devices within a network playing a game between a game provider and a network provider. The system includes a game server providing a tournament having a plurality of rounds. Each round enables the user to play a plurality of games provided by the game server on the user's communication device through the tournament. The user progresses to a next round upon exceeding a threshold score established for the round. The game server is in communication with the communication devices within the network. The game server has a database for recording each game played by the user and a user identification identifying the user. A fee is calculated for each game played by a user on the communication device. The network provider collects revenue from the

users for playing each game in the tournament and transfers a percentage of the revenue to the game provider.

[0013] In still another aspect, the present invention is a method of conducting a tournament by a game provider from users each having a communication device within a network provided by a network provider. The method begins by establishing a tournament having a plurality of rounds. Each round enables the user to play a game provided by a game server on the user's communication device through the tournament. A threshold score is established for each round. The threshold score is the score a user must exceed in a game to proceed to a next round. A user progresses to a next round in the tournament upon the user exceeding the established threshold score. A fee is determined for each game played by the user. The determined fee is sent to the network provider.

[0014] In another aspect, the present invention is a system for conducting a tournament of users of communication devices within a network playing a game. The system includes a game server providing a tournament having a plurality of rounds. Each round enables the user to play a game provided by the game server on the user's communication device through the tournament. The user progresses to a next round upon exceeding a threshold score established for the round. The game server is in communication with the communication devices within the network. The game server has a database for recording each game played by the user and a user identification identifying the user. A fee is calculated for each game played by a user on the communication device.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] FIG. 1 is a simplified block diagram of a gaming system in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0016] FIG. 2 is a simplified block diagram of the lobby servers within the system in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0017] FIG. 3 is a simplified block diagram of the game server of the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0018] FIG. 4 is a simplified block diagram of the billing server within the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0019] FIG. 5 is a graphical depiction of timed rounds within specified time periods in the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[0020] FIG. 6 is a graphical depiction of sequential rounds in an alternate embodiment of the present invention;

[0021] FIGs. 7A and 7B are flow charts outlining the steps for conducting tournament play according to the teachings of the present invention; and

[0022] FIGs. 8A and 8B are flow charts outlining the steps for conducting tournament play in an alternate embodiment of the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0023] FIG. 1 is a simplified block diagram of a gaming system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The system 100 includes one or more game servers 102 within the Internet 112 and a mobile data network 114. A billing server 110 is connected to one of the gaming servers 102 and a billing system of the Internet service provider or mobile service provider 116 (also referenced as the network provider). The lobby server 104 provides the initial interaction between mobile devices 108 operating in a mobile data network 114. A mobile device may be any mobile communication device, such as a mobile phone, a tablet computer, a PDA or any other device

operable on a mobile network, including a cellular network. The lobby server 104 also provides the initial interaction between computers 106 operating over the Internet 112. The game server 102 may optionally connect mobile devices 108 or computers 106 to one another. The billing server 110 may communicate with both the game servers 102 and a billing system 120 via the Internet 112 or a secure connection 118. Alternatively, the billing server 110 can communicate with the billing system 120 via the mobile data network 114.

[0024] The server applications may be deployed within a service provider's network or outside the service provider's network. The applications are scalable and are used for implementing and monitoring games played on a wired or wireless network. The system 110 includes the game server 102, lobby server 104 and the billing server 110. The game server 102 further includes a plurality of games available for download or direct play from either a mobile device 108 or a computer 106. In addition, the billing server 110 includes one or more databases for maintaining general user information, such as identification codes assigned to a particular user, user name, telephone number or IP addresses. The database or databases further provides storage for games played and may optionally include a start and stop time for each game played. The billing server 110 may communicate with an Internet service provider or a mobile service provider 116.

[0025] FIG. 2 is a simplified block diagram of the lobby servers 104 within the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The lobby servers 104 are connected to the computers 106 through the Internet 112. In addition, the lobby servers are connected to the mobile devices 108 through the mobile data network 114. The lobby server 104 runs an application that provides a virtual environment for players to meet and start games, to include tournament games. The lobby server may also determine the start and stop times of a plurality of tournaments. The lobby server function may be performed by the game server 102 or as a separate node in the network.

[0026] FIG. 3 is a simplified block diagram of the game server 102 of the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The game server 102 serves games to computers 106 through the Internet 112 and mobile devices 108 through the mobile data network 114. The game server 102 is a sever running a highly scalable Internet-enabled and mobile network enabled application that can serve and communicate with games running on either a computer 106 or a mobile device 108. The game server 102 also communicates with the lobby server 104 and the billing server 110. The game server 102 provides game data to the games running on the computer 106 or mobile device 108. The game data may include high scores, images, text, game level information, and other miscellaneous game content needed to play a game. The game server 102 also may receive customer and player information, game play data and player scoring data. The game server 102 may also authenticate players. The data collected by the game server 102 can be stored in one or more databases, either internally within the game server or externally. The game server 102 may also store a plurality of games available for download by a player. The game server may also recognize various protocol standards within one or more telecommunications or data network. For example, the game server may recognize TDMA, CDMA, GSM, or iMode, etc. protocols utilized within a network. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the game server receives a communication message, either directly or through the lobby server, from the computer 106 or the mobile device 108. Within the communication message is typically a header message indicating the type of communication protocol used within the network. The game server determines the protocol utilized and responds with the appropriate communication protocol. Thus, the game server may optionally communicate with one or more networks and their communication devices using different protocols.

[0027] In addition, the game server 102 also optionally stores start and stop times for one or more tournaments and the associated players.

Additionally, the game server 102 determines threshold scores necessary to proceed to successive rounds within a tournament. The game server also generates and sends messages to players as necessary on the operation and status of the tournament. For example, the game server may send a message stating the start and stop times of each tournament. In addition, the game server 102 may send messages indicating whether a player has succeeded in advancing to the next round.

[0028] FIG. 4 is a simplified block diagram of the billing server 110 within the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. The billing server 110 is connected to the game server 102 and the billing system 120 for the network provider (Internet or mobile service provider). The billing server 110 may include a billing database, a batch processor, and/or a real time processor, and billing data export modules. The billing server 110 collects customer and game play information each time a game is played on the Internet 112 or mobile data network 114 and stores this information in the billing database. The billing database may be implemented as a single database or multiple databases. The information may include customer identifications, game identifications, game start date and time, game end data and time, game completion statues, and other optional fields required by a specific game. The information may be retried directly form the game server 102 component of the system. The batch processor packages billing data for the billing data export module to send to the ISP's or mobile network provider's billing system 120. The batch processor is typically configured to run periodically (e.g., once a day), and sends the accumulated billing data for that time period to the billing data export module. In the alternative, the real time processor may package the billing data for the billing data export module. The real time processor runs continuously and sends billing data as it is received.

[0029] FIG. 5 is a graphical depiction of timed rounds within specified time periods in the preferred embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 5

provides a bar graph illustrating a plurality of timed rounds played at defined times. Each timed round lasts a period of time, for example 30 minutes. The tournament scheme provides a plurality of rounds (e.g., six as illustrated in FIG. 5) over six time periods (e.g., T1, T2, T3...). During each round, the player plays the game for a score. The player may elect to play multiple games during the time period of each round. During each game played, the player attempts to attain a specific threshold score necessary to progress to the next round. The threshold score may be determined prior to play. Alternately, the threshold score is determined after all players have completed the round. A number of players are specified for progressing to the next round. For example, if there are 100,000 players competing in the round and the specified number of players allowed to progress are 80,000, the minimum threshold score to be in the top 80,000 players is determined. If the player elects to play more than one game during the round, the player must complete the game prior to the end of each round for the score attained in the game to count.

[0030] FIG. 6 is a graphical depiction of sequential rounds in an alternate embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 6 provides a bar graph illustrating a plurality of rounds. The tournament may have a predetermined length of time. However, in this alternate embodiment, the player advances to each round at his own pace. Thus, upon successfully attaining a threshold score for one round, the player may immediately advance to the next round. The player may optionally play several games as necessary to attain the requisite threshold score to advance to the next round. However, the overall length of the tournament may be limited to a specific time period (e.g., 3:30 in FIG. 6). This alternate embodiment enables a player to complete a tournament without waiting for the start of a successive round.

[0031] For either scheme of tournament play, the game server 102 tallies the score or scores of the player to determine if the threshold score has been attained for that player. If the player has reached the threshold score,

the player is sent a message that he has successfully completed the round and may advance to the next round. In the first embodiment, the next round does not begin until the end of the previous round. Thus, the player may have to wait a period of time to begin play in the next progressive round. The entire tournament takes place over a predetermined amount of time, without regard to the pace the player plays at and attains a threshold score to advance to the next round. For the second embodiment, the player plays each round at his own pace.

[0032] In addition, the game server 102 determines the number of times the game is played, or alternatively, the time the player needs to complete each game played. The game server provides this information to the billing server 110. The billing server 110 may then provide the billing information to the billing system 120 of the mobile service provide 116 or Internet service provider (network provider). The network provider may then transfer a portion of the revenue collected to the game provider based on the number of games played or the total game time.

[0033] During the play of the game by each player, a provision for scoring additional bonus points may be used. The additional bonus points are awarded by clicking on an advertisement incorporated within the game. For example, if the game is a "fishing" game, the player may click on a beverage icon within the game. The beverage icon illustrates a brand of beverage. By clicking on the beverage icon, the player is awarded a bonus system, such as an extension of time, additional help from the system or points. The acknowledgement of any advertisement within the game provides the bonus to the player. The game server awards the bonus and tracks the number of times the advertisement is acknowledged within the game by all players. The number of acknowledgements received by all players in the game may be used by the game provider or network provider to determine a fee the advertiser pays for providing advertisements within the game.

[0034] With reference to FIGs. 1-5, the operation of the system 100 in the preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be explained. A player who wishes to play in a tournament connects with the system 100, either through the lobby server 104 or directly with the game server 102. In either case, in the preferred embodiment of the present invention, the player is authenticated to determine the identity of the player. The game server 102 or system 100 may advertise the start of a tournament, the type of game and the prizes to be awarded to winners via a broadcast to potential players through the computers 106 or the mobile devices 108. The game server may provide a wide variety of games, which may pit the player against the game itself, other players, or the game server. For example, the game server may provide games such as bowling, basketball, ping-pong, and aerial combat. However, any video game may be utilized in the present invention. Upon successful authentication of the player, the game server determines if the time is within the tournament playtime window, specifically for round 1. If it is determined that the time is not within the specified round time window, the player waits until the start of the round. Additionally, the game server may determine the type of communications protocol utilized by the player. The game server, upon recognition of the protocol used, responds with any messages or game information in the recognized protocol. However, if the tournament is in progress, the player elects to begin play in the tournament. The player plays the specified game.

[0035] Upon completion of the game, the game server determines if the player attained the threshold score necessary to progress to the next round. If the player has successfully reached the threshold score, the game server sends a message indicating successful completion of the round (e.g., "Congratulations, you have progressed to the next level. Please rejoin the tournament at 1:30. You may continue to practice.") Thus, the player may elect to either stop play and wait for the next round or play another game to practice, prior to the start of the next round. In the alternative, if the player

does not attain the threshold score, the game server sends another message (e.g., "Nice try, however your score needs to be better. Please give it another shot."). The player may then elect to play another game to attempt to reach the threshold score. The player may play as many games as desired during the time period of the round. Upon the completion of each game, the game server tallies the score and the identity of the player. For each game player, or alternatively the number of minutes played, is sent to the billing server 110. The billing server 110, in turn, sends the information to the billing system 120.

[0036] At the completion of each round, the game server determines each player who may progress to the next round. At the start of the next round, the player again begins play and attempts to attain the threshold score. As discussed above, at the completion of each round the game server 102 determines if the threshold score has been attained. Additionally, the game server tallies the number of games played or the time played and sends the information to the billing server 110.

[0037] Each successive round is played at the predetermined time until the end of the final round. The game server 102 then determines the winner and optionally awards prizes or publicizes the winner or winners of the tournament. Additionally, as discussed above, each player's number of games or time of play is determined and sent to the billing server 110 after completion of each game. In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the game server may provide the game number/game time player and the player's identity to the billing server at the completion of the tournament.

[0038] With reference to FIGs. 1-4 and 6, the operation of the system 100 will now be explained in the alternate scheme of tournament play. A player may desire to play a tournament at his own pace. First, the player communicates with the system 100, either through the lobby server 104 or directly with the game server 102. The player may be authenticated to determine the identity of the player. The game server may also determine the

protocol standard utilized by the player. Any messages or game information is communicated to the player through the computer or mobile device in the protocol standard utilized by the computer or mobile device. The game server 102 or system 100 may advertise the start of a tournament, the type of game and the prizes to be awarded to winners via a broadcast to potential players through the computers 106 or the mobile devices 108. Upon successful authentication of the player, the game server determines if the time is within the tournament time window, specifically for round 1. If it is determined that the time is not within the specified round time window, the player waits until the start of the round. However, if the tournament is in progress, the player may elect to begin play in the tournament. The player plays the specified game. During the play of the game by each player, advertisements may be incorporated within the actual game. If the player acknowledges the advertisement within the game (e.g., clicking on an advertisement icon), a bonus is awarded by the game server to the player. Advertisements fees may be determined from the total number of player acknowledgements. Thus, additional revenue may optionally be realized through advertisements incorporated in the game.

[0039] Upon completion of the game, the game server determines if the player attained the threshold score necessary to progress to the next round. If the player has successfully reached the threshold score, the game server sends a message indicating successful completion of the round (e.g., "Congratulations, you have progressed to the next level."). The player then progresses to the next round. If the player does not attain the threshold score, the game server sends another message (e.g., " Nice try, however your score needs to be better. Please give it another shot."). The player may then elect to play another game in an attempt to reach the threshold score. The player may play as many games as desired during a predetermined time limit of the round. Upon the completion of each game, the game server tallies the score and the identity of the player. For each game player, or alternatively the

number of minutes played, is sent to the billing server 110. The billing server 110, in turn, sends the information to the billing system 120.

[0040] At the completion of each round, the game server determines each player who may progress to the next round. At the start of the next round, the player that successfully completed the previous round again begins play and attempts to attain the threshold score. As discussed above, at the completion of each round the game server 102 determines if the threshold score has been attained. Additionally, the game server tallies the number of games played or the time played and sends the information to the billing server 110.

[0041] Each successive round is played in sequential order at the pace of the individual player until the end of the final round. The game server 102 then determines the winner and optionally awards prizes or publicizes the winner or winners of the tournament. Additionally, as discussed above, each player's number of games is determined or time of play and sent to the billing server 110 after completion of each game. In an alternate embodiment of the present invention, the game server may provide the game number/game time for each player and the player's identity to the billing server at the completion of the tournament.

[0042] For both schemes of tournament play, the network provider (e.g., Internet provider or the mobile service provider) generates revenue from the tournament, either on a per game basis or a time played basis. The generated revenue may then be shared with the game provider. For example, the game provider receives a percentage of the revenue collected for the amount of time the user spends on the network. The player may also be billed for downloading a particular game. The player may be billed either directly from the game provider or indirectly through the service provider.

[0043] Additionally, revenue may be generated by other actions taken by the user or player. For example, the game provider may charge the user a set fee for initially downloading particular games. The game provider may

also charge the player a set fee for each play of a particular game. The game provider may set forth in an agreement with the player that the player is to pay the game provider directly. In this case, the game provider would then send a bill directly to the user for downloading particular games and/or playing a particular game. This could b done, for example, on a pay-per play basis. In the alternative, the network provider may bill the player for downloads or on a playtime basis and transfer all or a portion of the revenue collected to the game provider. It should be understood that the game provider may also be the network provider.

[0044] FIGs. 7A and 7B are flow charts outlining the steps for conducting tournament play according to the teachings of the present invention. With reference to FIGs. 1-5, 7A, and 7B, the steps of the method will now be explained. The method begins with step 700 where a player desiring to play in a tournament communicates with the system 100. In step 702, the player's identity is ascertained by the lobby server 104 or the game server 102. The lobby server/game server then authenticates the player to determine if the player is authorized to play in the tournament (i.e., a paying customer). The game server may also determine the communications protocol utilized by the player's communication device. The game server automatically responds to the determined communications protocol for each player. Next, in step 704, it is determined by the game server 102 if the tournament has started. If the tournament has not started, the method moves to step 706 where the player waits until the tournament has started. Next, the player, after waiting until the beginning time period of the tournament, begins playing a game in step 708.

[0045] If, in step 704 it is determined that the tournament is in play, the method moves from step 704 to step 708 where the player plays the game. Next, in step 710, after completion of the game, the player's score is calculated and sent to the game server 102. It is determined in step 710 if the player's score has reached the threshold score. If the threshold score has not

been attained, the method moves to step 712 where it is determined if the round has ended. If it is determined that the round has ended, the method moves from step 712 to step 716 where the tournament ends. However, in step 712, if it is determined that the round has not ended, the method moves from step 712 to step 714 where the game server tallies the game and/or game time. Next, the method moves to step 708 where the player optionally continues to play in the round. The player may elect to discontinue play and quit. In addition, the player may quit the tournament at any time, being charged the amount of games played, or alternatively, the amount of game time used.

[0046] However, in step 710, if is determined that the threshold score has been attained by the player, the method moves from step 710 to step 718 where the game server tallies the game or game time. Next, in step 720, the round ends. In step 722, it is determined if the final round is completed. If it is determined that the final round is completed, the method moves from step 722 to step 724 where the tournament is completed. The game provider or network provider may award prizes, provide discounts, publicize the winner/winners, etc. to provide an incentive to the player to play in another tournament.

[0047] In step 722, if it is not the final round, the method moves from step 722 to step 726 where the player waits until the beginning of the next round. Next, the method moves to step 708 where the player again plays another game in the next round.

[0048] FIGs. 8A and 8B are flow charts outlining the steps for conducting tournament play in an alternate embodiment of the present invention. With reference to FIGs. 1-4, 6, 8A, and 8B, the steps of the method will now be explained. The method begins with step 800 where a player communicates with the system 100 to play in a tournament provided by the game server 102. In step 802, the player is identified and authenticated by the lobby server 104 or the game server 102. The game server may also

determine the communications protocol utilized by the player's communication device. The game server automatically sends any messages or game data in the format of the recognized communications protocol. Upon identifying and authenticating the player, the method moves to step 804 where it is determined by the game server 102 if the tournament has started. If the tournament has not started, the method moves to step 806 where the player waits until the tournament has started. Next, the player, after waiting until the beginning time period of the tournament, begins playing a game in step 808.

[0049] If, in step 804 it is determined that the tournament is in play, the method moves from step 804 to step 808 where the player plays the game. Next, in step 810, after completion of the game, the player's score is calculated and sent to the game server 102. Next, in step 810, it is determined if the player's score has reached the threshold score. If the threshold score has not been attained, the method moves to step 812 where it is determined if the round has ended. If it is determined that the round has ended, the method moves from step 812 to step 816 where the tournament ends. However, in step 812, if it is determined that the round has not ended, the method moves form step 812 to step 814 where the game server tallies the game and/or game time. Next, the method moves to step 808 where the player continues to play in the round, until successful completion (i.e., attaining the threshold score or termination of the round). Optionally, the player may elect to discontinue play and quit. In addition, the player may quit the tournament at any time, being charged the amount of games played, or alternatively, the amount of game time used.

[0050] In step 810, if is determined that the threshold score has been attained by the player, the method moves form step 810 to step 818 where the game server tallies the game or game time. Next, in step 820, the round ends. In step 822, it is determined if the final round is completed. If it is determined that the final round is completed, the method moves from step 822 to step 824 where the tournament is completed. The game provider or

network provider may award prizes, provide discounts, publicize the winner/winners, etc. to provide an incentive to the player to play in another tournament. In step 822, if it is not the final round, the method moves from step 822 to step 808 where the player again plays the game in the next round.

[0051] The alternate methodology provides several advantages over existing tournament play schemes. The alternate methodology and system enables a player to play at his own pace. This embodiment enables a player to sequential play the tournament without waiting for the start of a define time for each round. Thus, the player may play in a shorter period of time. While enabling the player to complete the tournament faster, it also provides for revenue to both the game provide and the network provider.

[0052] The present invention provides several advantages over existing systems. The present invention provides for a scheme of tournament play which encourages the player to play while obtaining enhanced revenue to the game provider and the network provider. The present invention also provides a novice methodology to share revenue collected in such a tournament scheme of play. In addition, the set up of the tournament provides for increased incentives for playing multiple games to advance to the next round. Existing systems do not provide such a scheme for multiple games in one or more rounds. In addition, the present invention enables players utilizing different communications protocol (e.g., CDMA, TDMA, iMODE, GSM, etc.) to communicate and play within the tournament. Additionally, revenue is also realized through advertisements incorporated within the game. For each acknowledgement by a player within the game, advertisement revenue may be assessed.

[0053] While the present invention is described herein with reference to illustrative embodiments for particular applications, it should be understood that the invention is not limited thereto. Those having ordinary skill in the art and access to the teachings provided herein will recognize additional

modifications, applications, and embodiments within the scope thereof and additional fields in which the present invention would be of significant utility.

[0054] Thus, the present invention has been described herein with reference to a particular embodiment for a particular application. Those having ordinary skill in the art and access to the present teachings will recognize additional modifications, applications and embodiments within the scope thereof.

[0055] It is therefore intended by the appended claims to cover any and all such applications, modifications and embodiments within the scope of the present invention.